

Friday, February 22, 2008

NTSB Testifies on Capitol Hill

Vice Chairman Sumwalt testified on Wednesday, February 13, before the House Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Aviation. The safety hearing focused on the issues of runway incursions, pilot fatigue and air traffic control fatigue. Other government witnesses on the panel included the Government Accountability Office, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Transportation

NTSB Participates in MIA Disaster Preparedness Drill



Jose Obregon and Jeff Kennedy with Chairman Rosenker at the MIA Disaster Drill

Chairman Mark Rosenker, Assistant Tom Doyle, Eastern Region Deputy Chief Jeff Kennedy, and Miami Aviation Investigator Jose Obregon participated in a disaster preparedness drill at Miami International Airport on February 21, 2008. FAA Certified Airports are required to conduct these drills every 2 to 3 years. The drill objectives were to provide a platform for training and familiarization for all responding agencies including fire, EMS, law enforcement, news media, Miami Airport Authority, NTSB, and FAA. The drill also served to evaluate and improve coordination between all responding agencies, improve responding agencies overall effectiveness and preparedness, and to evaluate and improve Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting tactics and strategies.

The scenario for the drill was that the crew of a Boeing 757-200 reported smoke in the cockpit and failure of all hydraulic systems about 10 minutes after takeoff from Miami. They declared an emergency and reported that they would return to Miami and land on runway 9. There were 120 souls on board, the airplane contained 48,000 pounds of fuel, and had radiological material as cargo. ARFF was notified and responded to the landing runway. As the flight landed it touched down 3,000 feet from the arrival end of the runway at 180 knots. The crew was unable to stop the aircraft before it over-ran the runway where it collided with the localizer antenna, perimeter fence, and a service vehicle on the perimeter road.

The drill site was staged at the aircraft search area at center field of Miami International Airport. American Airlines loaned a Boeing 767-300 aircraft for the drill. About 40 injured "victims" were made up to resemble injuries and were staged in and around the aircraft. A fuel fire was ignited near the staged accident site to initiate the drill. ARFF personnel responded and put out the fire and began attending to the injured. Helicopters from the Miami-Dade Fire Department and the U.S. Coast Guard responded and some of the injured victims were airlifted to Ryder Trauma Center where a parallel disaster preparedness drill was conducted. The on-site NTSB personnel viewed the initial ARFF response from the viewing area and then were given a tour of the injured triage area and briefed on the use of the triage tag placed on each victim. The NTSB team then responded to the Command Post and became part of the incident command structure. When the ARFF Incident Commander declared that fire fighting and rescue activities were complete the scene was turned over to the NTSB. The NTSB team then attended a debriefing and Chairman Rosenker spoke to those in attendance.

Chairman Rosenker was quoted in the Miami Herald the following day: "We've found that drills like this are extremely valuable in helping first-responders perform and perfect their training."



Chairman Rosenker observes the drill

Vice Chairman Sumwalt Meets With South Carolina Legislators

On February 5, Vice Chairman Sumwalt met with key South Carolina legislators and attended the Subcommittee meeting (South Carolina Senate Judiciary Committee) to support House Bill (H.B.) 3496, legislation that will strengthen South Carolina's impaired driving statutes. Over the last 10 years, 43 percent of South Carolina's highway fatalities have been alcohol-related; more than 62 percent of alcohol-related fatalities have involved a hard core drinking driver (high-BAC or repeat offender). H.B. 3496 proposes increasing penalties for higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels, increasing penalties for refusing to take a BAC test, expanding the use of ignition interlocks, and mandating assessment and treatment for offenders.

Member Hersman Addresses Two Aviation Groups



Member Debbie Hersman participated in a panel discussion at the Aircraft Maintenance Outsourcing Summit held in Washington on February 11. The event was sponsored by the Business Travel Coalition and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Other panelists were representatives of the aircraft maintenance industry, including mechanics and labor representatives. Member Hersman shared a Safety Board animation of the crash of Air Midwest (US Airways Express) Flight 5481 in Charlotte, NC on January 8, 2003. John DeLisi (AS-10) prepared Member Hersman's talking points for the discussion.

The prior week, Member Hersman participated in a panel discussion at the winter board of directors meeting of the Airport Council of North America held in Las Vegas, NV. On February 8 Member Hersman gave a presentation on the airports' role in an

NTSB accident investigation. Also on the panel (pictured with Member Hersman) were Dick Marchi, Senior Advisor, ACI-NA; Brian Lackey, VP of Operations and Chief Engineer, Greater Toronto Airports Authority; and Michael Gobb, Executive Director, Lexington-Fayette Urban County Airport Board.

Member Higgins Testifies on Motorcycle Safety in Missouri

On February 13th, Member Kitty Higgins testified before the Transportation Committee of the Missouri Senate on a bill that would repeal most of the state's universal motorcycle helmet law. If passed, many motorcycle riders no longer would be required to wear helmets -- but riders under age 21 and riders and passengers on Missouri's interstate highway system still would be required to wear helmets. The bill includes a sunset provision, requiring the legislature to review the legislation in 5 years.

Along with Bill Gossard from the Office of Safety Recommendations, Member Higgins provided information from the Safety Board's 2-day public forum on motorcycle safety and review of a number of motorcycle accidents. For example, since 1997, motorcycle fatalities have increased 127 percent. Last year, 4,810 motorcyclists died in crashes, and accounted for more than 10 percent of all motor vehicle crash fatalities. Specific data was provided on the increase in fatalities and serious injuries for states that repealed their universal helmet laws. Currently, only 20 states, the District of Columbia, and 4 territories have universal helmet laws requiring all riders to wear a helmet. Twenty-seven states and 1 territory have partial laws that require minors and/or passengers to wear such helmets. Three states have no helmet laws.

Member Higgins also discussed the recommendations to the states issued by the Safety Board in September 2007 to require all motorcyclists and passengers to wear DOT Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218-compliant helmets. This was the first time the Safety Board has been asked to testify on legislation to repeal a state's universal helmet law.

